THE GREEN LIGHTS
OUTSIDE OF POLICE STATIONS

No, they are not bug lights but actually a part of US history! It is believed that the “Rattle Watchmen”, who patrolled New Amsterdam (now New York City) in the 17th century, carried lanterns at night with green glass sides in them as a means of identification.

When the Watchmen returned to the watch house after patrol, they hung their lantern on a hook by the front door to show people seeking the watchman that he was in the watch house.

Today, green lights are placed outside the entrances of Police Stations as a symbol that the "Watch" is still present and ever vigilant.

The University of Texas at El Paso has the only Police Station in the area with this traditional lighting. The double green lights outside the main entrance were factored into the design and construction of our new police station, which opened in January 2006.

Below is a photograph of a typical green lantern that is in front of the New York City Police Department’s (NYPD) 110th Precinct stationhouse located in Queens, NY. These green lights are usually found at police stations in the Northeast part of the United States, but they are a part of American Police TRADITION, and this tradition is proudly continued here.